

Living a Christian life in a post-Christian world.

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It's been a busy year or so with a lot of ups and downs. We have had a lot of trials and a lot of miracles. I just praise God that I am still saved, still set free and still called according to His Holy purpose.

Now, at the age of 81, I have had to narrow down the important elements of my life. My zeal for the lost will always be a fire of zeal within my heart. I think of Caleb now, who at my age was still wielding the sword and charging the giants of his day. I was in my 'secret place' praying recently and felt the Holy Spirit call me very specifically to the Book of Numbers, Chapter 14, verse 24.

*It read: But My servant **Caleb**, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.*

I knew that this was a godly word for me! I prayed that word over my own life and the lives of my descendants. I felt what I can only call A "Caleb anointing" fall upon me and renew my heart and my zeal or the Lord and the lost.

I pray that this article I wrote a few years ago, may help you as much as the discovery of its revelations helped me both back then as well as today.

As I prepared for a ministry a few years ago, I had to realize just how tired I was, how exhausted from the constant battle for souls! I found myself crying out to God, "*What do you expect from me?*"

It was like He thundered back out of the heavens, "*Just the first works, Ed, Just the first works!*" That response caused me no small amount of "Review" on my life and my

ministry. In follow up, I want to share a little on our callings and our purposes in the kingdom of God. Especially in times like these we face today.

Our callings, both yours and mine, as Christians are simply to bring the Gospel of salvation to a lost and deceived people.

In my ministry, we have traveled the globe, witnessed to many hundreds of thousands and reached so far many more through our films and books, radio, TV, the Internet. It has been a long and weary battle for souls. Yet in every meeting, in every pile of letters and emails, are those whom the Holy Spirit has drawn unto the voice of truth. We have seen the abundant salvation of souls and that is our marvelous reward.

The price is high, for this intense struggle for souls is against the powers and principalities of darkness. We sometimes ask God and ourselves... *when can we rest?*

How should we be engaged in these sometimes-exhaustive ministries? We are often told to just preach Jesus, convert by the example of your life, feed the poor and promote world peace.

Yet, our once lost hearts cry out to bring the message of repentance to our friends and families living in deception and lost to God forever. *There is that urgency.*

Today, in America, there has been a serious decline in Christian participation on the public arena. Christ and the Bible have been removed from the Public domain, prayer from schools, biblical principle from the airways and from the training up of students. from preschool to University. Anything is acceptable except a Christian presence. Many schools today have places and times set aside during school hours for Muslims to pray yet, even an after-school meeting of Christians is prohibited anywhere on school grounds.

Crosses and displays of the Ten Commandments are being ripped down from very public places. Whole organizations roam across the nation looking for the slightest example of a Christian or Jewish display.

The Christian Church has become a toothless shell of itself. Seeker Friendly churches would not offend a radical atheist or Homosexual member by daring to inquire if that person is living in sin and needy of repentance and restoration with a Holy God.

People handing out gospel tracts are being arrested for harassment. Bible studies are shut down and hosts fined because someone somewhere is offended by the cars parked there once a week. Yet no one shuts down a rowdy drunken party next door because that is not a Christian activity that would offend someone somewhere.

We have a social Christianity in today's America. Not a Capital C Christianity, but a lower case Christianity so that no one is offended. Easter bunnies and Halloween witches and Santa and his elves have replaced biblical truth and denigrated the reality of our faith.

Yet, some churches are still led by righteous pastors and they often pay a price for that commitment to their calling.

Churches will soon be fined if they do not provide birth control and abortion costs in their insurance plans. Religious Hospitals may have to shut their doors. Yet Muslims are exempt from paying any part of Obama Care because of their faith. Yet the Catholics and other faith based institutions will be fined out of their valuable programs.

Christian churches and groups that perform weddings must obey the law and perform weddings for deviants or be fined, and shut down as I have reported on other occasions. It is already happening. Churches and Non Profit Christian groups will obey or lose their non-profit status. Men can now walk into lady's room in stores and government buildings, schools and universities. Why? Because our anti-Christian government so decrees it.

Yet, the attack isn't just from without. It is happening in our homes, as well. I read an article recently that said that teenagers and young married couples under 35 now spend less time watching TV and more time playing video games. The vast bulk of these games are evil, demonic, sexually explicit and filled with murder and horror. These perversions have been filling the minds of our young people now for years. They have been desensitized to murder and moral depravity. We have personally taken to using a DVR and filtering our TV, especially the news. But, Christian families are losing their children to the world.

Some of them are playing for as many as 8 hours a day and have become disassociated from reality. Add in the explosion of social media and iPhone games like Pokémon, it is a rare teen who can still make eye contact.

Another report in a Christian Journal asked: *Could half of Christian men have a problem with porn, as so many of the statistics say?*

Porn is reported to be a 12 billion dollar industry in the U.S. Fifty percent of men viewed pornography within one week of attending a Promise Keepers stadium event... 54 percent of pastors said they viewed porn within the past year in a Pastors.com survey... in a Focus on the Family poll 47 percent of respondents said porn is a problem in their home.

The following excerpt is from an open letter Chuck Swindoll posted on his Insight for Living Website not long ago:

"The most recent studies available suggest that one out of every two people—that's 50 percent of the people sitting in our pews, are looking at and/or could be addicted to Internet pornography... Truth be told, that statistic could be even higher..."

Stop and imagine the ugly but very real possibility of some of your own elders and deacons leaving your meetings and going home to surf porn. Think about youth leaders viewing it one minute, and leading a small group with your kids thirty minutes later. It's ruining marriages, destroying relationships, harming youth, and hurting the body of Christ. You hardly need to be reminded that fallen pastors and priests did not "suddenly" fall. More often than not, pornography played a role in their downward spiral.

My friend, it's time to do something about it. In fact, we need to start today. Making a difference requires action... Our churches are in trouble. This is no time to simply wait and pray."

Today, we who may call ourselves strong Christians are shaking our heads and wondering what we individually do in this anti-Christ time. It is a problem that seems to be consuming even the church.

We ask God "What do you expect from me?"

The whole world is against us. The government has become our enemy and the enemy of Christ...the church is crumbling around us. Sometimes, in the middle of an America that is discarding its Christianity, we forget to reflect on what we can actually expect from God in troubled times of any kind.

Well, we do know several things about God.

1. God's will is explicit: He is "*not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" (2 Peter 3:9). Our Holy God didn't decide that the word was for just us Christians. Nowhere does He say that the Muslims, Hindus or the Buddhists or even the atheists should be excluded. His will is that *not any should perish*.

Christ gave his disciples the great commission, *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* (Mark 16: 15-16)

2. Even though God wants all people saved, in the real world, they are not. Today, just while you read this, many thousands more will die and go to a Christ-less eternity.

We cry out, “Why, God?” More than likely, He answers, “Why, my children?”

I suppose there are many reasons. We don’t have enough missionaries, Christians are too materialistic, too busy trying to earn a living and feed their families. Churches have lost their vision for the lost and place their direction on those they already have. It is too embarrassing or too private a matter to question strangers, neighbors, family and friends about where they plan to spend eternity, and on and on.

I preached one time at a large, strong, Calvinist Presbyterian Church. I did not understand their doctrines about Unconditional election or predestination). God had a master list of those who will be saved and those who will go to hell before creation in Gen 1:1. The list is unchangeable. They had a limited atonement, where Christ did not die for all mankind, but only those on the “saved List”.

I had an altar call at the end of my message and asked those who wanted to repent of their sins and ask Christ to be their Lord and Savior to stand. The Pastor, sitting behind me, all but had a stroke and leaped up, hurled some sort of a nasty at me and ran from the building.

Several dozen people were standing and as I prayed for them, more stood up. I went back a few years later. The angry pastor had left soon after my first visit and the place was alive in Christ. The people were leading others to the Lord in

their homes, since it was forbidden in the church. Soon the church had a different fee; la different spirit. The unsaved pastor didn't just leave. He fled.

We sometimes miss the real problem. The bottom line here is right at the feet of the prime mover, the primary source, Satan. People are simply lost because *Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so that they Cannot see the light of the gospel.* (2 Cor. 4:3-4)

We are uncomfortable preaching with boldness, and it is often like doing battle because it is a direct declaration of war against Satan. I can really relate to Paul when he prayed, in Ephesians 6:18-20.

“Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watch thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel for which I am an Ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

It's hard to speak Boldly like that! I know! I have been doing it for forty years.

But, it is essential and that's the service God wants from each of us. And remember, every time a person is saved, a battle is won for the Kingdom of God. This is why we are told that the Angels in heaven rejoice every time a sinner repents. That is why we often feel beat up after such a battle with the enemy.

3. Well, a third thing that we know about God is that He knows far better than us that Lostness is a reality.

It's a fact of life because Satan has not yet been destroyed and is still in the full time employ of seduction of mankind. That first lie in the Garden (*Ye shall be as Gods!*) is being repeated today, even from the pulpits of some of our very own churches. Satan is going to be with us until Jesus returns.

The question remains: “*Why does God allow such terrible things?*” Why are some saved and others lost? Why have I been able to lead people to the Lord all over the world and yet several of my own family are lost while others are saved and warriors for the King?

The theologians have battled with this question for centuries. Doesn’t God love that little dying child in Ethiopia or Cambodia as well as He loves that child whose parents are members of some American church?

Meanwhile, knowing these things, what must we do? **You and I?** This world isn’t going to get any holier. The world’s behavior is not getting any better. It is on a downward spiral and will fall into a far worse condition than we can even imagine.

It isn’t about what the world or our nation or our politicians or even our pastors can do. We see what that has given us already. It is about what we must do. Now. Here. Today.

We must do that which most have forgotten to do....

The first works of the believer!

Even though we know that not everyone will be saved, we *must* step out and spend our lives getting as many saved as we possibly can. We may not have the puzzle finished but we can interlock our own piece of it to its full place within the picture!

Dealing as I do with those not only lost, but buried in the priestcrafts of the false religions, I have been often told, “I can’t deal with your God until you tell me why he lets the little starving children die without this grace you are offering me.” or “What kind of God would let all the people die in wars?”

I have had to pray about these things and finally came up with the only Godly answer I know I can give,

*“Your preoccupation with God dealing with these ‘worldwide’ catastrophes before dealing with yourself is a satanic delusion. What you need to face is what you are and that is a person lost to sin. You must deal with what you know and that is simply that **you** are personally lost to God and that is the first thing you need to worry about.”*

Again, another of the very first works of the believer is the healing of the sick. Those of us who pray for the sick are often asked, *“How come everyone you pray for isn’t healed?”* This is one of those stumbling blocks of having a lost soul.

We know that it is God’s will for us to be well. But, while God does not want people sick, many are. Is it their lack of faith, our lack of Kingdom power or God’s lack of interest?

While we can come up with many reasons and theologies, it’s got to be back to basics. These problems are part of the works of Satan. Some are indirect results of the fall, such as bacteria, viruses, poison, lack of nutritional food and so on. Some are the result of catastrophic sin, such as AIDS. Some are there through lack of faith, unforgiveness or personal sin. All are rooted in Satan’s dominion. None of these issues should prevent a Christian from laying hands on a sick person and praying for their healing. That is the least you can do. Then leave it in God’s hand.

What are we to do? Well, let’s go back to the first works.

We are to oppose the devil in all his works and in all his ways. James, the brother of Jesus told us in the 4th chapter of his Epistle, *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you! Draw Nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you.”* Some pretty simple and powerful advice.

Paul said, in II Tim 4, *“Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”*

I’d sure love to take Paul on a trip through Utah!

Paul finishes up a lot of his epistles with the words, “Finally Brethren..... ” It’s like his pause before his “*End/Game*”! I’ll follow his example.

Finally, brethren, we are to preach the gospel as though there are no more days left to man. We are to pray for the sick as though their very lives depend on our very words and we are to expand the boundaries of our spiritual lands and exercise the gifts of the Spirit in our lives! We are to leave the worry of what follows to God who has none.

We are to rejoice with the Angels for each one saved, healed, set free from demonic influence, we are to pray without ceasing, and we are to send forth everyone who will go.

What about each of you? Have you let the “Big Picture” get so far away that you don’t have to deal with your part in it? Have you given up that loved one to the world and Satan? Have you grown weary, become burned out in well doing and lost your vision, your Zeal?

Are you one who has begun to believe the enemies’ battle reports and turned down the volume on what God has been saying? Then come with me back to the basics.

Let’s just do it because God said to do it, because Jesus called us to do it and because we know to do it.

Do what? Only you can know what you have to let go of. Only you can know that neighbor you just don’t have time for. Only you know that sin in your life that needs to be confronted. Only you know that bitterness toward someone that is eating a hole in your spirit.

Only you can make the difference. Only you can fit your piece into the Puzzle. One other thing that God truly knows is that without you, the whole picture will never be complete! I pray that God sets you on fire to do *just the First Works!*

I suggest that you print out the following “Marching Orders” and read it out-loud to yourself every morning before you walk out that door into the fallen, post-Christian world you live in!

The Whole Armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-20

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints —

19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. NKJV